WINTER CULTURE IN NORTHERN SECTION - Mildred Hartley

This is the time of year when all the Hibiscus growers in North Florida are busy getting ready to bed down their Hibiscus for the Winter ahead. We have all enjoyed the beautiful blooms all summer but now comes the real test of our love for Hibiscus.

Some people have been feeding with a 0-14-10 fertilizer since July and some start a little later. It takes quite a long time to harden the plants enough to stand the cold around Jacksonville. It also helps the plants to hold their buds and it helps to make the colors more vivid for the shows in September and October.

However, just hardening the plants isn't quite enough in this section. To the people that bank their plants with sand I would suggest putting some Chlordane around the plants to discourage the ants and insects before putting the sand around them. Some people I know use moss to bank around their plants because it lets in air and keeps out the cold. It is also easy to remove on warm days.

Some of our members plant their Hibiscus in beds so they can build a frame around them and cover it with Plastic for the Winter. Be sure you fix one side

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so you can roll it up on warm days. The plants need fresh air even in the winter. They use small oil heaters or electric heaters on the nights that the temperature will drop to freezing. Be sure you water plants during the Winter, even if they are banked they need water.

We are lucky because we have a small hot house we put our plants in because we keep most of them in large containers anyway. However, before we stack them in for Winter we put Hybrotite in all the cans. It helps condition the soil and gives them that little added something to pull them thru the Winter and start them off in the spring.

All this sounds like a lot of work and it surely is. But in the Spring when the plants start to get green and lush looking and those buds produce beautiful blooms you look at them and say, "yes, it was sure worth it."

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